

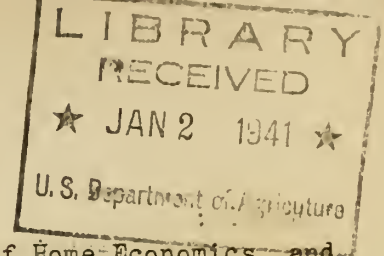
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Cotton Stockings are in the News Again



A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Forney Rankin, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, October 22, 1940, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 87 associate radio stations.

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FORNEY RANKIN:

Here we are in the Nation's Capital. And first here's Ruth Van Deman with more news from the Bureau of Home Economics.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

Yes, Forney, this is news that will interest you. Do you remember the broadcast we gave a year or so ago about the cotton stockings?

RANKIN:

You mean the stylish cotton stockings the Bureau of Home Economics is designing --- as an outlet for some of our surplus cotton?

VAN DEMAN:

The same.

RANKIN:

I certainly do remember that broadcast. --- And I remember the letters that came after it, --- letters from women all over the country expressing interest in these good-looking new cotton stockings.

How are your textile people coming on with that project?

VAN DEMAN:

Very well. Mr. David Young, the hosiery designer, has worked out over 80 different designs, and released them to the trade. Some are fine mesh patterns, some plain, some have open-work or embroidered designs on the ankle. They've all been made up experimentally on regular hosiery machines --- the same kind of machines used to knit high-grade, full-fashioned silk hose.

RANKIN:

Have any of these designs been taken up by commercial companies and put into regular production?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, we know of at least three companies that are making cotton hose similar to our designs.

RANKIN:

Then they're actually on sale in the retail stores?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes. Stores here and there all over the country. We can't follow through to just which stores, where. And as a Government agency the Bureau of Home Economics can't guarantee the quality of these hose produced commercially. Nor can we in any way set the price.

(over)

RANKIN:

No, certainly not. As I understand it, your Bureau's job, under the assignment given it by Congress, was to demonstrate what could be done with cotton as a modern hosiery fiber. I suppose women had almost forgotten what cotton stockings looked like.

VAN DEMAN:

Almost. Twenty years ago 70 percent of women's stockings were made of cotton. Now it's only 4 percent.

RANKIN:

Whee-u. That's quite a revision downward --- 70 percent to 4. Silk of course wormed its way in, shall I say, in place of cotton.

VAN DEMAN:

There's some rayon too. But silk has of course been far and away the most popular for stockings. In 1939, the women in this country bought 516 million pairs of silk stockings.

RANKIN:

What would happen if the supply of raw silk were cut off?

VAN DEMAN:

That's just the question. There are the new synthetic fibers of course. But the production of them isn't anywhere nearly enough to meet the demand at present.

RANKIN:

And I understand synthetic fibers are being studied as a possibility for parachute manufacture. In case they work out right there, I suppose it's not unreasonable to expect that a large part of the supply might be diverted to national defense purposes.

VAN DEMAN:

Which would leave rayon,---cotton,---wool---for hosiery. I know one guess is as good as another when you try to predict what women will be wearing next year. But anyway I'm going to venture the guess that in 1941 a great many of us will have several pairs of lisle stockings in our hosiery wardrobe.

RANKIN:

By lisle, now, you mean hose made of long-staple cotton, spun into fine yarn, which is mercerized and gassed to give it smoothness and luster.

VAN DEMAN:

That's practically a definition of lisle, Forney.

RANKIN:

I just wanted to be sure. I've heard so many arguments as to whether lisle was pure cotton.

VAN DEMAN:

Absolutely. The name came from a city in France, where originally a linen yarn similar to our present mercerized cotton was made.



RANKIN:

With our modern methods of textile manufacture we can make the finest kind of lisle here in this country. It's chiefly a question of consumer demand.

VAN DEMAN:

Speaking of demand, you remember we had a lot of letters from nurses and other women who want an all-white stocking that can be boiled if necessary and still stay white?

RANKIN:

Yes. That seemed to me a wonderful break for cotton hose. I don't know of any other fiber that can take hot soapsuds quite the way cotton can.

VAN DEMAN:

Very true. And I'm happy to announce that one of our cotton stocking designs now in commercial production is an all-white lisle, specially designed for nurses' wear.

RANKIN:

Fine.

VAN DEMAN:

It was put through laboratory tests and wear tests. A group of 68 student nurses in one of the Washington hospitals cooperated with us on a day-after-day wear study.

As a result the original design was improved in several ways. So the white hose now being manufactured have larger and heavier reinforcements in the foot..

RANKIN:

Interesting. I know trained nurses have a powerful lot of footwork to do. They must be pretty hard on their hose.

VAN DEMAN:

Decidedly. And they do a lot of bending and stooping. So these new cotton stockings have a two-way stretch welt, and a runstop near the top. Also they're made in three lengths---short, medium, long---to fit a woman of any height.

RANKIN:

Are they made in any color but white?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes. If there is sufficient demand they can be had in a fashionable shade of tan, and in black, to go with dark uniforms.

RANKIN:

That's fine. --- Well, thank you, Ruth Van Deman, for bringing us up to date on the cotton hosiery research at the Bureau of Home Economics. Again, I take it, you'll be glad to answer questions on the subject.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, we'll be glad to give all the information we have.

RANKIN:

Thanks. Farm and Home friends, if any of you are interested in knowing more about the cotton stockings designed by the Bureau of Home Economics, just address your letters to the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, here in Washington, D. C.

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